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INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L WINDHOEK 000368

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TAGS: PREL PHUM WA ZI

SUBJECT: TSVANGIRAI MEETS QUIETLY WITH POHAMBA IN WINDHOEK

Classified By: Ambassador Dennise Mathieu per 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) In a November 14 meeting with Namibian MFA Permanent Secretary Ambassador Veiccoh Nghiwete, DCM asked about a press report that President Pohamaba had met in Windhoek with Zimbabwean opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai before the November 8-9 SADC summit. Nghiwete confirmed the story, saying it was Tsvangirai's first "official" visit to Namibia.

According to Nghiwete, Tsvangirai had requested the November 7 meeting and had met only with the President, whom he briefed on the status of talks with ZANU-PF.

¶12. (C) Nghiwete described the meeting as "nothing special," adding that the GRN was happy Tsvangirai had come. He reported the President reiterated the GRN position that there must be a lasting solution to the crisis and that a government of national unity must be established. DCM expressed concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation and noted that the Zimbabwean crisis was having a negative impact on the entire region. He urged SADC to stay actively engaged in the search for a solution and to underscore that unilateral actions are not helpful. Nghiwete agreed unilateral actions were unhelpful and was dismissive of the feasibility of ZANU-PF's proposed co-leadership of the Ministry of Home Affairs. He opined that it was a testament to the patience of the Zimbabwean people that they had not resorted to widespread violence.

¶13. (C) Comment: This meeting was clearly at Morgan Tsvangirai's initiative, and it sounds as if Pohamba was primarily in listening mode. We assume the Windhoek stop was part of a regional round of consultations prior to the latest SADC summit. Namibian officials continue to say little in public about the situation in Zimbabwe. In private conversations with us, they express concern about the situation there and support for a government of national unity. However, they continue to defer completely to Mbeki in his role as mediator.

MATHIEU